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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

30 MAY 1980

LIBYA: Eliminating the Opposition

With his continuing purges at home and killings of dissidents abroad, Libyan leader Qadhafi has deepened discontent with his 10-year-old regime to dangerous levels. As his opponents grow increasingly desperate and the attempts against him multiply, the odds against him increase. [REDACTED]

25X1

Qadhafi apparently launched his latest moves against domestic opponents to force Libya into his revolutionary mold, although he may have been reacting to conspiracies uncovered at home or abroad. He has been chafing for some time at the failure of the Libyan people to adopt the nebulous social and political theories enunciated in his "Green Book." [REDACTED]

25X1

In January 1977, Qadhafi proclaimed Libya a "jamahiriya"--a coined word roughly translatable as "state of the masses." In March 1979, he divested himself of all official positions except command of the armed forces--a move that in no way altered his power. [REDACTED]

25X1

Economic changes accompanying the political moves worked increasingly toward the elimination of private capital and completed the alienation of the middle class. In April 1979, death was prescribed as the punishment for economic crimes. [REDACTED]

25X1

This February widespread arrests began--mainly bureaucrats at first, then senior military officers and members of the "people's committees," which ostensibly supervise all aspects of public life. Perhaps 2,000 have been arrested, and many have been publicly humiliated. [REDACTED]

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Those arrested have been singled out for their alleged lack of revolutionary fervor and for so-called economic crimes. The purges have resulted in a major upheaval of Libyan life. An atmosphere of fear and suspicion has come close to paralyzing the normal operation of Libyan institutions. [REDACTED]

25X1

As a result, there have been scattered reports of local riots and perhaps four assassination attempts against Qadhafi--the latest just last week. Qadhafi reportedly wears a bullet-proof vest and lives in a mobile "command van" enabling him to change his location unpredictably. [REDACTED]

25X1

Killings Abroad

Qadhafi's opponents in exile have for years been organized loosely into perhaps three groups, some with overlapping membership, and they have received financial assistance from Egypt and Iraq. Although some of the exiles may retain some following in Libya, they probably are incapable of posing a significant threat to Qadhafi. [REDACTED]

25X1

Qadhafi believes that Libya's revolutionary image cannot tolerate any organized opposition. This March the regime published a declaration calling for the physical liquidation of enemies of the revolution abroad. Within a few weeks a Libyan student was kidnaped in London by members of the Libyan "people's bureau"--Libya's version of an embassy. [REDACTED]

25X1

Murders apparently committed by Qadhafi's special "hit squads" now total nine--two in London, four in Rome, one in Beirut, one in Bonn, and the latest, on 21 May, in Athens. [REDACTED]

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Exiled groups probably are more determined than ever to move against Qadhafi, if only in self-defense. Consequently, they are likely to accept a greater degree of risk than in the past. [REDACTED]

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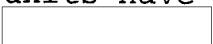
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Threat at Home

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An organized coup attempt is most likely to come from within the military, elements of which are known to have been disenchanted with Qadhafi for years. His recent inauguration of "revolutionary committees" inside military units have undercut discipline and eroded morale. 

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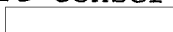
Qadhafi has always been careful to guard against moves from the military by transferring officers frequently and by installing trusted followers--usually tribesmen--in sensitive positions. The purges and assassinations, however, almost certainly have broadened support within the military for action against Qadhafi. 

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Succession

Should Qadhafi be assassinated, a struggle for power could be touched off. Since Qadhafi's only remaining office at present is commander in chief of the armed forces, there would be no immediate need to name a successor; Abd al-Ati al-Ubaydi, the General Secretary of the General People's Congress, is technically chief of state. Key candidates to wield actual power also would include Qadhafi's closest associates, particularly Abd al-Salam Jallud, considered his de facto deputy. 

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A military coup presumably would replace all of Qadhafi's men with some kind of military council, and a period of protracted instability might follow. Any military group probably would be more conservative, at least in terms of domestic policy. 

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